

The 1997 NRI, Iowa

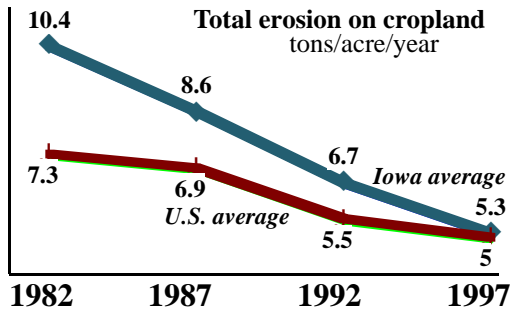
Trends in natural resource care in Iowa



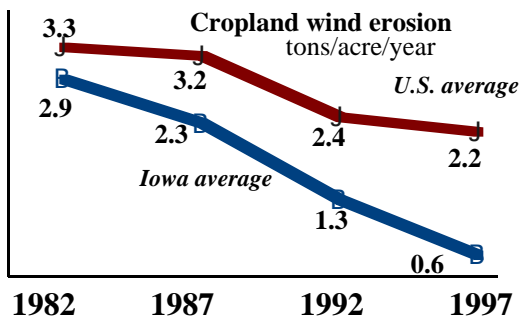
Erosion cut by 1/3 on Iowa cropland in past 20 years



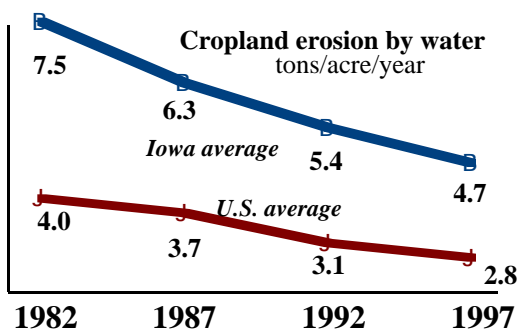
The U.S. Department of Agriculture does a check-up every five years to monitor the changes in the condition of natural resources on the nation's privately owned land. The changes are traced by a study known as the National Resources Inventory (NRI), conducted by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information, visit the web at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



Most of Iowa's soil erosion, nearly 90 percent, is sheet and rill erosion from cropland. There has been a steady drop in sheet and rill erosion over the past 15 years. Yet, soil erosion rates remain above tolerable levels on many soils, and 134 million tons of sediment were washed off crop fields in 1997.



Erosion caused by blowing wind has been cut almost in half in 1997 from the amount in 1982. Increased use of conservation tillage, leaving the past year's crop residues on the soil surface, played a significant role in cutting wind erosion from 2.9 tons per acre per year to .6 tons per acre per year in 1997.



Soil erosion by water rates on cropland have been cut from 7.5 tons an acre in 1982 to 4.7 tons and acre in 1997. Erosion rates on pastureland in Iowa have fallen slightly but remained fairly constant since 1982, just above a ton per acre per year. The Iowa rates are above national averages.



Soil erosion has been cut by more than a third recently, but Iowa still ranks 5th nationally in erosion rates.



A surge in the use of conservation tillage by Iowa farmers in the 1980's and 1990's has reduced erosion.



Conversion of about 1.7 million acres of highly erodible cropland to grass has helped reduce erosion in Iowa.

USDA NRCS
Des Moines, Iowa

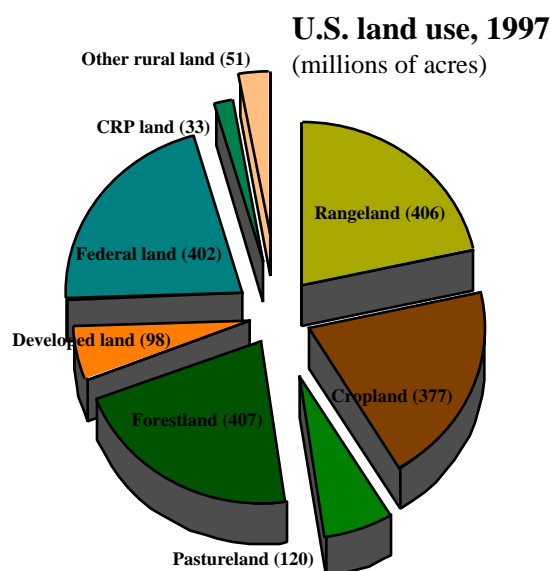
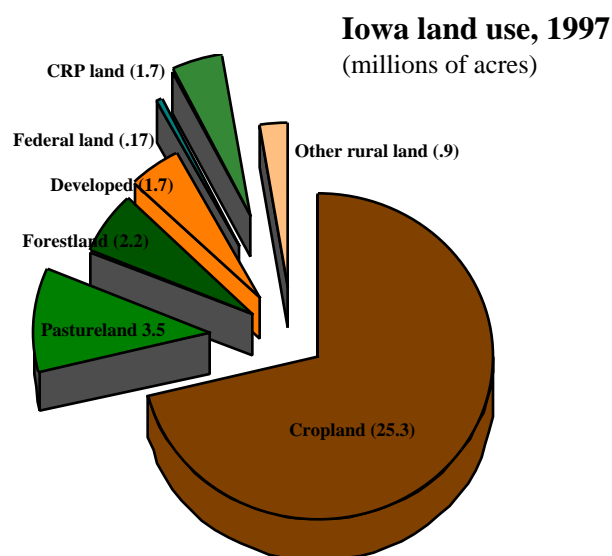
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Trends in how Iowa land is used

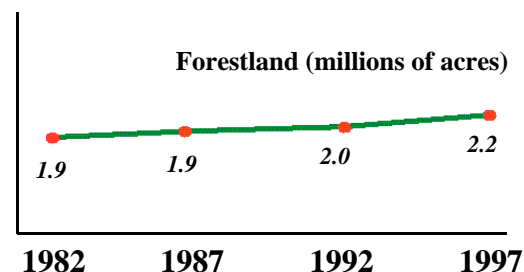
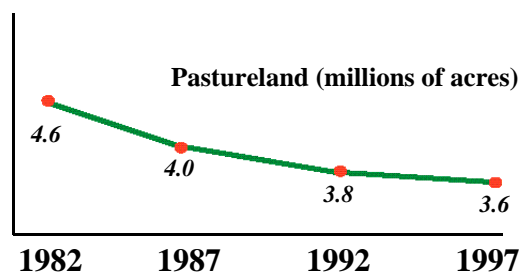
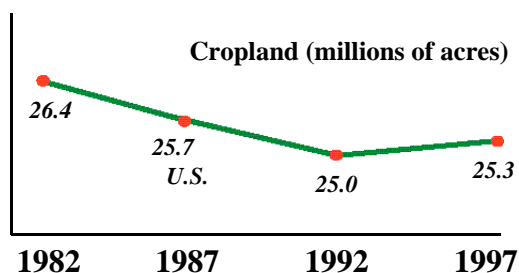
Land use in Iowa: mostly cropland



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Iowa land use trends



Iowa cropland acres decreased by about 4% from 1982 to 1997, primarily from the 1.7 million acres of land converted to grass and trees temporarily through the Conservation Reserve Program. Pastureland decreased steadily in that time, from 4.6 million acres to 3.6 million acres, while forestland increased from 1.85 to 2.18 million acres.



About 120,000 acres were developed from agriculture to urban uses in Iowa from 1982 to 1997.

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